POETRY QUARTERLY

edited by Wrey Gardiner
and published by The Grey Walls Press
7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall

VOLUME 13, NO. 2, SUMMER 1951

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL *page* 51

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL: *To Urien* 52

CLIVE SANSOM: *Grainne's Song* 54

DORIAN COOKE: *Another Sestina in the Autumn of 1950* 54

W. R. RODGERS: *The End of a World* 56

JAMES KIRKUP: *To Find the Longest Distance Between Two Points* 56

THOMAS GOOD: *The American War Cemetery at Luynes* 57

DAVID WRIGHT: *A Funeral Oration* 58

ROBERT GREACEN: *By The Winter Sea* 58

HAROLD PINTA: *I Shall Tear Off My Terrible Cap* 59

JAMES MICHIE: *Lion with the Face of God* 60

OSWELL BLAKESTON: *Reverberation* 60

P. A. T. O'DONNELL: *The Haunted Day* 61

PATRICK GALVIN: *Four O'clock* 61

EDITH WEAVER: *The City of Night* 63

SEYMOUR GRESSER: *Roots of the Wanderer* 64

VERNON SCANNELL: *I Grieve for a Lost Land* 64

DEREK STANFORD: *Plaque for the Passing of Days that are Numbered* 65

GILBERT PHELPS: *The Waking Lovers* 66

MARJORIE BOULTON: *The Sick Poet* 66

MADGE HALES: *Flight Image* 68

MURIEL SPARK: *Birthday Acrostic* 68

ROY MCFADDEN: *Notes for Persephone* 69

KENNETH GEE: *Morning* 73

DEREK STANFORD: *David Wright: An Impression* 77

HOWARD SERGEANT: *A Countryman's Faith* 86

MURIEL SPARK: *The Stricken Deer* 89

WREY GARDINER: *Some New Books* 91

Subscription Rates

6s. per annum, including postage, or 1s. 7d. per copy. Subscriptions, contributions and all correspondence should be addressed to THE GREY WALLS PRESS, 7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1. accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope if a reply is desired.

Although unsolicited MSS. are read with care, owing to pressure of work, they cannot always be returned at once, nor can the Editor undertake any responsibility for such MSS., a copy of which should be retained by the author. In case of acceptance, a proof will be sent before publication.

Distribution in U.S.A. by British Book Centre
122 East 55th Street, New York

POETRY is the expression of emotions lying far down in the deepest strata of human experience. It is to the credit of this country that English poetry is one of her most valued exports, but it may soon be one of those ghostly properties which economists call "invisible". The few who support it are not deceived by the spate of inferior work that still gets past busy publishers with other things on their minds. Recent efforts at paper bound production at negligible prices has not met with the success hoped for by its promoters because unless the work offered has the hope and promise of a new Dylan Thomas the few coins of the poor who buy poetry will remain in their pockets or disappear over the bar counter in search of another beer. There is so little in the modern idiom of sweatily elaborated imagery that reaches towards the heart and guts of human beings. But there is hope in the continuous stream of little magazines from America, many of them roneod, but full of vitality. This is a movement that has been noticeably reflected in this country recently. We have received copies of a greater number of well printed broadsheets and first numbers of new magazines than ever before. It is a good sign. Let us for a change be hopeful.

In this year of Festival after the spending of vast sums on theatrical production and painting the Arts Council has given a few hundred pounds in prizes to poets. The winning entries were chosen by a panel of judges well known in every other field except that of a knowledge of contemporary verse, with the possible exception of Sir Maurice Bowra who has remarked in one of his books that he doesn't think much of it. These gentlemen have distinguished themselves by ignoring the entries of well-known poets—the writer of these words was *not* one of them,—and placed their laurel crowns on the brows of the unknown, except for Mr. Clive Sansom, one of whose winning poems we print in this issue. It would be interesting to know what fees and expenses were taken out of this princely donation sponsored by academic timidity, ignorance and sour superiority, and even if the judges saw all the entries which must have been monumental in bulk, or whether a familiarity with Picasso may have been deemed a sufficient qualification for the lightening of the labours of the mighty.

RAYNER HEPPENSTALL

To Urien

Taliesin composed it.

It will happen with speed
To him of Coel's breed
Out of whose long hand we feed
On wine, meal and mead,
A conqueror without greed
Memorable in his every deed,
To lead
Those of our creed
Anew,
Under his broad thigh his steed,
Flags and captains, a crowd
Of tall spears, all Rheged's retinue,
To battle in Lothian.
Back will come
Familiar, long-haired cattle of the Pict,
Cow, heifer and milch-cow, the ox
Loaded both sides with liquor furnace-distilled,
Eight score beasts of a colour in line,
Barns filled,
Frisian grain to be milled
All winter, everything else we need.

What should we do
If luck deserted Urien,
The darling of his countrymen,
Dread
Of the Saxon, who
With his white hair wet and a cracked head
On a red bier rides home?
The ill-defended bleed:
Insolent once, now they plead.
Lloegr lacks wherewithal to impede
A widower of her wives,
And I have wine.
Wine is what I like:

It builds up the brain, gives
To the heel pace
And a twist to the wrist when it comes to rearing a pike
And lunging face to face.

Ah, but listen:
You at the door,
What do you hear?
Is it an earthquake,
And does the whole land shake,
Or is it blowing up a gale?
Does the sea glisten,
And do its white crowns borne upon the swell
Tumble about your feet pell-mell?
Did it come from the valley, that shout?
Urien is thereabout.
Was it up the mountain, a cry of fear?
Urien's weight is behind the spear.
Or the cry of a wound, this side of the hill?
Urien's sword drinks its fill.
If the shrill
Pitch of his anger cried, and they run,
Neither pass nor defile, road nor ravine
Shall let them out:
His battle-rage will run its course
And trace the heart's blood to its source.

Because of its little ways,
His spear is known as the death child:
It wears a long blue ribbon about its neck,
And nobody goes hungry who takes pot-luck
With that young lord.
When I am old,
May I not die with a smile
If my tongue is not still busy with the praise
Of Urien,
The bread-winner, the open hand
Of this whole land.

CLIVE SANSOM

Grainne's Sang
(From the Irish)

Festival of Britain Poetry Prize Winner

Sleep, Diarmid, my lover,
For a space of the night, sleep.

Thought the deer stands wakeful, raising
His horn on the slope eastward,

Though restlessly thrush and linnet
Fill the wood with their dark magic.

And grouse through the wild air
Are crossing the stormland crying—

For a space of night, Diarmid,
My lover, my lover, sleep.

DORIAN COOKE

Another Sestina in the Autumn of 1950

Still on the warm side of a hard home-coming,
Like one still dim in the doorway of sleep
With his back turned on the burnt-out hall of dreaming,
I must choose between the devil and the deep.
My thirty-three years of arming and disarming
Are apt to slur articulate escape.

Let me remember, while the nights escape
Towards October, every old shortcoming
Of the hairy summer; for I cannot sleep
In the unwiving cold and keep this swarming
Pageantry at bay. December is a deep
Way off and out of earshot when I'm dreaming.

Many are crippled in the plunge to dreaming,
Or burned on the ladder of the fire-escape.
Who knows the danger spots in these alarming
Expeditions in and out of sleep?
The news from Christmas is a long time coming
I hope the snowdrifts won't be very deep.

Memory slides invisibly, like a deep—
Sea fish. Below the twinkling floors of dreaming
There is a voiceless struggle to escape
From the amniotic dark and a coming
And going of multitudes like wisps of sleep
In nuptial flight or back to summer swarming.

I have no time to take up desert farming;
And playing the memory game cuts too deep
To the bone with echoes of the Second Coming.
With luck or two my childhood may escape
The worst world and the devilry of dreaming
All my winters out till the next blind sleep.

Still on the worst side of my last half-sleep,
Like a hard home-comer at his door, warming
His hands at the cold fireplace in his deep—
Lined pockets, I can hear the snarls of dreaming
Lurkers left dark in the lurch of escape
At the wrong window of the winter's coming.

I leave them still asleep and turn to noises coming
From the next face deep in its agony of arming
The chances of escape, the mouths and eyes of dreaming.

W. R. RODGERS

The End of a World

Now was the world's back broken; the darkness
Heaved in half, the wells rose up in walls
And fell in floods; and earth's own gorge
Rose and retched out its coffins. Everwhere
Lightning lashed, and the curled thunder rolled
Its bolts over the crowd that broke and ran before its
crash.
Each flash showed them in a different flight.
And in the downpour only the soldiers stood
Sodden and awed beneath the Cross. "This was the Son of
God!"

To them the eliminating moment was
The illuminating one. Now all was still.
And on the desolate plain behind the hil
An ass brayed. Its palmy days were over.

JAMES KIRKUP

To find the Longest Distance between Two Points

From eye to object no straight line is drawn,
Though love's quick pole directly kisses pole.
The luckless aeronaut feels earth and moon
Curve endlessly below, above the soul
His thought imagines, engineers in space.
The crewless captain feels high heaven swoon
In elliptic oceans, where deserts roll.
The lost explorer sees the mountain raise
A cryptic summit where no valley is.

Pacing the infinite's familiar place
Where things on things revolve, yet hover still,
And race into star-screwed oblivion,
The longest distance from that point we found
Shortest to this, where nothing is defined.

THOMAS GOOD

The American War Cemetery at Luynes

Out of it all the desolation sobs
Windwards among the tilted rocks;
No brief notation, outdistancing the raven
And this crisp light which carries the plumed hills
Too beautiful to repeat, and penitential all the same.

Revisted in a lake of winter
The notorious landscape on a saffron afternoon
Alone, as grey gulls fasten on white crosses,
The numbered named in corridors of shame
Who wished no doubt to end the mischief
Here in a sense survive;
For the absent and the loving
A monument of comfort
To decipher in reflection
But dispute the justice still.

Eternity knocks at the heart of evening
The Great Not-I winks in-between the clouds
To where the placid sky invisibly lengthens
Too swift for famished egos to contain
Which only watch to pierce the ornamental
And the glory of it all.

My friends who've looked into the eyes of death
So elegant and coifed but her hands how cold they are,
Give us a pennyworth of fear for tomorrow,
Give us the rind if not the brisket,
Give us the tin if not the biscuit,
For charm against this fact, belief perhaps,
Or mortgage us against this pregnant stone.

DAVID WRIGHT

A Funeral Oration

Composed at thirty, my funeral oration: Here lies
David John Murray Wright, 6′ 2″, myopic blue eyes;
Hair grey (very distinguished looking, so I am told);
Shabbily dressed as a rule; susceptible to cold;
Acquainted with what are known as the normal vices;
Perpetually short of cash; useless in a crisis;
Preferring cats, hated dogs; drank (when he could) too
much;
Was deaf as a tombstone; and extremely hard to touch.
Academic achievements: B.A. Oxon. (2nd class);
Poetic: the publication of one volume of verse,
Which in his thirtieth year attained him no fame at all
Except among intractable poets, and a small
Lunatic fringe congregating in Soho pubs.
He could roll himself cigarettes from discarded stubs,
Assume the first position of Yoga; sail, row, swim;
And though deaf, in church appear to be joining a hymn.
Often arrested for being without a permit,
Starved on his talents as much as he dined on his wit,
Born in a dominion to which he hoped not to go back
Since predisposed to imagine white possibly black:
His life, like his times, was appalling; his conduct odd;
He hoped to write one good line; died believing in God.

ROBERT GREACEN

By the Winter Sea

What can we say to-day that is not negative?
Do not and again *do not*. Thus failure to act
Seems more commendable than a positive stance,
Here at the foam-edge of this pounding sea,
Grey, neutral, dirty-specked, with March wind scourging it.
And across the faded acreage of years the drums
Of childhood beat themselves to death. *O do not act*
Like frenzied drum-beaters, incensed by doom.

Encased in a winter despair may one still hope
For another spring, for a tunnel away from gloom,
Far below the crust of earth, out then to a valley
Green in a haze of summer noon, gold fires ablaze?
Or, not advancing, retreating sometimes, faith's crumb
holding,
Making a zigzag effort to be honest about motives,
(The Hamlet self, the double man ringed round by question
marks)
Can affirmation come, keeping at arm's length meantime
The lonely sobbing of this morbid sea,
And smothering the maddened drum-beat of a childhood
Lost long aeons ago on a Northern shore?

Do not and again *do not*—wait, it will come!

HAROLD PINTA

I shall Tear Off my Terrible Cap

I in my strait jacket swung in the sun,
In a hostile pause in a no man's time.
The spring his green anchor had flung.
Around me only the walking brains,
And the plack of their onelegged dreams
As I hung.

I tell them this—
Only the deaf can hear and the blind understand
The miles I gabble.
Through these my dances of dunce and devil,
It's only the dumb can speak through the rubble.
Time shall drop his spit in my cup,
With his vicious cut he shall close my trap
And gob me up in a drunkard's lap.
All spirits shall haunt me and all devils drink me;
O despite their dark drugs and the digs that they rib me,
I'll tear off my terrible cap.

JAMES MICHIE

Lion with the Face of God

Lion with the face of God
Hid in a cloud of hair,
Walking worried and just,
Making of captivity
A fabulous desert of pride.

Heraldic self-contained
Lion serious as pain,
Yellow as topaz, erupting
Out of a bleak field
Into our imagination.

Sand-throated lion in the glare,
Swamp lion howling, winter lion
Guarding a sunny pose
Even in the north wind,
Lion dreamt or seen in cloud.

King lion with no people,
Roaring enough to shake
Leaves, if there were, from trees,
Not making and not breaking
Silence, important, alone.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

Reverberation

My love asleep is as sweet as pebbles
That polish wishes in a rooted river,
Yet with a dream his pulse was wed with other waters
With green-long sea to float his drifting will
Remote and tall as an iceberg's shadow:
I know for in the night I heard
Even from the heart of a chilling world
Leviathan's belly-groan.

P. A. T. O'DONNELL

The Haunted Day

Spring's flares illumine civil streets
And sun
The timid legends of our love, for this
Is Grace, a wisdom of the blood

That breathes its angelus through bluest space.

But, sharply pale, north-easterly,
Above
The bricks of purpose, stares a fossil moon's
Irrelevance, entombed in air,
And chimes through chaos our unsounding knell.

PATRICK GALVIN

Four O'clock

At four o'clock coming home the road
Four o'clock with lights on the snow
I met a woman with burning hair
And ringlets of fire upon her shoulders.

In the palm of her hand she held a star
Between the rings of burnished brass
And the bell rang out from Peter and Paul's
For Rellan's dragging beast was out.

Four o'clock and the reeds of blood
And Rellan's beast on the road for bones
Among the reeds, among the reeds
That spoke disillusion for the woman I met.

Four o'clock coming home the road
Four o'clock and the burning hair
The song of the dead from the winter clock
That pondered and ticked over inches of snow.

I paused by the woman of burning hair
I asked her name but she turned away,
She cried to the East and begged to the West:
Madasha, Madasha, he's home from school.

O what do you want coming home the road
With English and Irish held under your arm?
I can give you a deer to lead you on—
But I wanted a birch tree to plant in my garden.

I can give you the word and bread to eat
And arrows of love to drain your blood,
I can give you the cream from a Kerry cow
But never a birch tree this hour of the day.

Then give me the skin of Rellan's beast
And I'll lay it over a field of corn
And every ear will turn to two
And every reed will speak your name.

But she gave me her name in streams of fire
While East was up and West was old
And the day couldn't breathe at four o'clock
Lonely burning four o'clock.

Coming home the road through the bowels of Hell
Where lamps were cold as traitor's lime,
Madasha, Madasha is the name
Coming home the road holding my stillborn learning.

She was up and away through England's snow
Down the road with her burning hair
And Rellan's dragging beast grew sick
On bones and bones at four o'clock.

I shall never get home from school to-day
This dark demented reaping day
And souls are ice and flames and stone
At four o'clock on the road alone.

EDITH WEAVER

The City of Night

The city of night
looms behind the rotting sunset
more powerful than any brightness.

Though noonday stand about you
in white Doric columns,
a shrine of order, do not be deceived
the humblest raindrop can embalm the sun.

Light is concealment, a vast tapestry
behind whose golden thread the blind man waits,
whistling the maddened senses
plunging at our chariot.

The pageantry of nature's ritual
that crowds the vividest, the summer's day,
whips on the folds of that gold curtain,
helpless as embroidery.

The sunlit centuries that sought the great,
the formal
as armor for their animal
dim as we act, unwilling puppets
for voices buried in the darkened soul;
we, a forked people, fancying ourselves
as single as a pole.

SEYMOUR GRESSER

Roots of the Wanderer

I. *Severn*

Beginning where a bubble breaks the earth
the water twists itself into a twine,
falls down the vine-grown hill and flows
a reptile winding from invisible roots.

The thin grey-shadow of a bird
leans poised like a cloud-formed face,
rocks left and right in the swivel wind
as my foot stills the pendular-moving boat,
the trough-heart swells
    aches rolling like a steeple-prisoned bell
    wild hell of incestuous war,
    flight to the river memory,
    the shattered faces when it rains
always passing by, far out the laced shore folds,
a falling anchor sends a circle madness
    through the waiting;
    the shore drowns
and a wild bird screams
    death bears no illusion.

VERNON SCANNELL

I Grieve for a Lost Land

I grieve for a lost land as the gulls swim
Easily on air, parodying pain
With their outrageous cries;
I grieve for a lost land as the dark stain
Of night spreads over the sad skies
And the gulls drift into silence on a chill wind.

And later, when the sea's great engines roar
Ceaselessly of death and exile, I recall
Nights starred with promises
Of a bright morning's golden madrigal
And skies blue as the nursery boys
Who blew their silver trumpets when the cows were
in corn.

I grieve for a lost land which lies beyond
This sea which tells its hunger to the night
And shakes its rags of foam
For the idiot moon's remote delight;
I grieve for a dead child. a lost wand,
A shore to which no exile may return.

DEREK STANFORD

Plaque for the Passing of Days that are Numbered

Autumn, with its drenching rain,
drains all brightness from the air;
fainter fades the bluebell sky,
greyer grows the atmosphere.

Leaning towers of hollyhocks
tumble into disarray:
sun-flower seeds, like hour-glass sand,
plot each morning-misted day.

Every leaf now's minted gold:
every golden leaf must fall;
stark, overhead, the hangmen stars
uncoil their ropes of silver foil.

Actors, whose will to act is lost,
we take our cue from nature's stage;
and, in its frost-tipped hieroglyphs,
interpret Time's red bonfire age.

GILBERT PHELPS

The Waking Lovers

For half an hour our temperaments
lie on the shelves, our Sunday best,
we yawn contempt at cerements
that marked our status, aptly dressed.

Sprawled at our ease, our sly content
impugns our carriage, (civil head,
eyes anxious for the least comment),
scorns government, and well planned tread.

The hard-worn gambit shirks its turn,
the far-flung enterprise revealed,
dashed wits and dignity discern,
provincial circus, nibbled field.

And if our arrogant luxury,
the stretch and ripple of our hides,
challenge the hearth, what right have we
to fiercer forests, darker tides?

MARJORIE BOULTON

The Sick Poet

(*for* Jules Supervielle)

Day after day the body
Exudes its sepia shadow
And blurs the accurate outline;
The ceiling is a landscape
Of blinding arctic anger,
The lamp a burning mountain;
The milk and broth and water
Have lost their true proportion,
And all the guarded frontiers
Of subject, verb and object

And inwardness and concept
Are lost in vanished contours.

The shadow of the body
Obliterates the window
And climbs among the bottles;
The rhythmic heart grows vaguer
And stumbles in its metre,
A syncopated pattern;
The ruined body trembles,
Making the spirit humble
With ignominious languor
Though still behind the forehead
The memories are ordered
And ripened phrases dangle.

Here in a ruined body
Infested with its shadow
The patient patient lies;
The undefeated spirit
Is shining in its turret
Behind the lighted eyes;
A gentle beast that suffers
For homeless men and lovers
Lying in healing fever,
That dies each day of beauty,
Respect and chronic pity
And of incurable wonder.

MADGE HALES

Flight Image

Wing suspended in cloud contours the images
break their brooding, fly wild to fill an age;
here where pictorial earth stares I gather
sun tawn lost to fields below, swarm the cloud
glow for my winter healing.

Frivolity of landscape leaps all learning
rivers are string, forests smudge a space;
with vanity slain I slip my façade
the shadow soars, cuts the unfeathered height
and silver fish flash by.

MURIEL SPARK

Birthday Acrostic

Crossing a sort of river I suppose
Having come to your fiftieth birthday
Are you a aware of change? I don't think so
Really, for there has never been the
Least concern about time in your philosophy
Except of course Opening Time, that is
So long as I've known you
Which is about four and a half years isn't it?
Returning to what I was saying: Time is
Everywhere but in you, so Wrey
You are celebrated here in my poem being a
Good friend and more than that
A symbol of an endless afternoon spent in
Reverie of other afternoons when you were
Dreaming of France or Cynthia or poetry.
I celebrate you here, knowing you don't
Notice the state of affairs, only the sun and wine,
Even though being fifty you are crossing a sort of
River I suppose.

ROY McFADDEN

Notes for Persephone—I

You will recall the view from the hotel:
The smoking thatch, the sidelong trees, the swell
And endless ebb of birds across the sky,
The table and the window, you and I
In love, in life, in place and time: correct.
How could we step aside then to suspect
That time like the old world is flat, and we
Could stumble over to eternity,
The merciless door of silence shutting after,
Clipping a joke, snipping the frills of laughter,
Half left like a torn coat in questioning hands,
The door of silence with its iron bands
Rusty with blood from fists and arms that fight
The dumb destroyer final as the night.

The silence. Afterwards the silence. Throw
Open doors to sound and movement. O
Birds and rain and leaf-loud winds, come in
Under this silence, blood beneath the skin,
Life within death. Sad bits and pieces, fall
For one shocked moment, clock-stopped interval,
Into ultimate shape, with stem and stone
Finding their place: the separate fragments known
Familiarly, too quickly, for the whole
To meet us squarely. Let the silence roll
Wholly around, anonymous as sea
Or winds intent on their own geography;
The silence after rain and birds fall still,
Clear and full and distant as a hill.

You will recall the glens and how we walked
For miles that Sunday morning; how we talked
Hardly at all, except to bid good-day
To Sunday-suited farmers, or to say
Hallo to some wise sheepdog in the sun:
Or from the roadtop point out Cushendun.
That was a heart-filled silence, not this dumb

Enemy that waits and watches from
Mirrors and doorways, not to be brought out
Into a room beyond the gloom of doubt
With furniture and books, with things of size
And shape for recognition by the eyes.
O when will the road rise that I can see
Greeting of roofs beyond the mystery.
You will remember that white week in June
When sun greeted our mornings like a tune
Played on balconies; those warm smooth days
Chasing the Irish half-light from our gaze,
The grey-green drizzle from our veins and bones.
Strong sunlight suited you; strengthened half-tones,
Decided on the turquoise in your eyes
(At home as changeable as Antrim skies).
I am most glad and grateful for that small
Episode of sunshine, and for all
Cracks and crannies in our lives where love
Struck root among the flagstones, in spite of
Concrete circumstances, flinty facts,
And all that doubts and hedges and detracts.

We understood each other, and therefore
Only death could teach us any more.
But I am slow at learning from the grave,
Deaf in the silence; all the things you gave
For love of giving heavy in my hands;
The lack of you around me in torn strands
Of the ripped pattern. I need sight or sound,
Need eye and voice to fight the underground,
You with the thoughtful eyes and dark groomed head:
I need an apparition from the dead.
The answer's never intellectual;
Truth meets us only in a miracle.
I can believe and would accept as fact
Life beyond the range of intellect.

This door for instance: surely there remains
Something of your touch, live latent veins
Of feeling left by you the times you turned
To say goodbye, remember; or returned
Bright with news and projects. I lay hands

Upon cold metal—cold ironic bands
Rusty with blood upon the silent door—
Saying I wait your message, neutral or
Leaning to meet the miracle, the breath
Of meaning out of mystery and death;
Saying I believe, I will break through
The barriers of blindness and face you,
Time elbowed out; saying I wait a sign,
That I can recognise and claim as mine.

The limpy hen for instance: you defied
Advice of books and neighbours when you tried
To keep life in it; and succeeded too.
O small black hen, the quiet-voiced one who
Brought you life had no one who could break
The wave that took her, none who did not take
Professional opinions as the true
And final revelation. I tried to
Attract the truth; I called on miracles,
On all the tried indomitable wills
Of my own people in eternity,
But, lacking something, failed, the lack in me
The weakness in the wall for the dark wave;—
O small black hen—believing, could not save.

I still remember on your wedding day
How in church your grace touched every grey
Shut Presbyterian face with harmony,
And opened doors and windows and set free
The prisoners in those hearts. But what can they
Give back to you or me except Sunday-
Smooth texts and all the cardboard sentiment
That crumples before fact: they would resent
My grief and my resentment. I prefer
The company of dog and garden, where
The bones of thought remain unhardened, and
Where I can feel more than I understand.
—I still walk after that June funeral
When you went out, a bride, in gown and veil

With flowers and love,
All I could give.

Before I lose the hurt in the response,
Let me record my protest, and renounce
Allegiance to that power and influence
I put my trust and hope in. Say the tense
Was wrong and God is something yet to be
Completed from the deaths of you and me:
Nonetheless I watch the munching sheep
Of this and other cities skirt the steep
And dangerous rocks of feeling, and would have
Them deep beneath the ground if it would save
You and others of intelligence,
Sympathy and beauty. Say the tense
Was wrong, still I repeat for what it's worth:
The meek, the gracious, shall inherit earth.

Peace:
Gouged-out eyes.

People and places. Now I must assess
Through memory, not intent on happiness
But aptness and relationship to you,
Your sanction for the attitude and view,
Your answer to events. I will not go
Away from things you lacked the time to know
But stay and know them for you: live life more
Because you died when you were twenty-four.
And all the time observe and note the ways
Of the dumb enemy until his gaze
Is caught in mine, until I hear at last
The word: the word that breaks into a vast
Carnival of meaning, reeling skies
Of birds and bells, and there before my eyes
You in the centre radiant as a tree,
Shaking off darkness and all need of me.

Then I shall claim you as earth claims a tree.

KENNETH GEE

Morning

Morning light paws the pane softly;
Growing, spills over sill and ceiling
Like snow, though never dumb like snow,
Being anyway rung and sung through with thin
Cries of birds like tangled wires.
Sky drained of nightlife and pale as water,
Wears these bright skeins of sound before its
Six o'clock china-blue; glass bowl
Where beaks you cannot count are telling
Yesterday's same time round again—
Or is it yesterday or now?
That patch of sky above deep roof
That is the watershed for pouring
Night, was always there. And will be ever.

Which is end of world at waking
In tumbledown house by pillows, rocks,
Roses? sleep is deeper than underwater.
More than drowned we rise, being blind,
And cautious as animals entering
New tracks. Since last night, night has happened.

That pane of glass we stare at—merely
A painter's abstract canvas. Eye
Has lost its bearings, and fumbles
To arrange familiar life from unknown glass:
A bird or leaf is floating there,
And we make out the literal world
That tumbles in beneath our eyelids,
With a shock, a knocking on our minds,
Bringing a shower of yesterdays
In its track of sudden sensual things—
Mere light, pure as water, wind
Breathing somewhere through blades of grass;
These how like immortality returning.
Yet we ourselves undone, robbed of roots
Deeper than thoughts; rolled far under
Hollows of night, we visited

Antipodes of daydream; and safe back,
Do not know if this is what we want,—
Daylight striking us without pity,
Entering everywhere, turning back
Corners of our life like curtains
Frayed with grief, and stirring today's dust,
Misery and promise of the streets:
There a few footfalls in early air
Sound clearly though not meaning yet
More than light tap of twig on pane;
If people walk, then they walk distant
From our naked, unprotected rising
Out of blind darkness to white day,
Out of oceanic caves
Where blown, impossible flowers, and wrecks,
The still lit glow of our desires,
All abet us in not living:
We fear separation from the night.

Light storms crevices and crannies
And takes mirrors by assault,
Leaving echoes of a vast disorder,
Opening recklessly old wounds,
Probing for entrance to the heart.
Light is a miracle not breaking glass,
Breaking cruelly on us.
Sunlight lets down tawny loops
That are tracks for diving birds,
And begins within our veins
A shaking out of leaves of life,
Quickening dull pulse as tick of clocks
Roars out its tiny thunder of time
And bells are gathering to strike in clusters;
So that there's no mistaking morning,
No avoiding light and waking.
Now shed daylight accustoms us
To wanting it over again, and night
We relinquish, looking outward and up
To weather determining a sky
Of high summer cirrus or tumble of spring

Cumulus. Calm. All blown over.
Of all light is the miracle and maker.

To which we turn like grass lifting
From black underground to cerulean roof.
The window, no longer a stranger, spills
Its life of birds and branches and street noises
Into the room; minute, accurate
Bombardment: shrill beaks like arrows; river tides
Tawny, heaving mud and sea
Against the city, penetrating
Narrow walls with life of space and light;
A last morning lorry rumbles
Wearily downstreet, shaking attic and basement;
And all cries and calls of birds and men
Break in like daylight robbers. Night
Lingers only in some cold-shadowed corner,
Violet fugitive in yellow
Bright dust of sun on street.
This music pours over us like water
And rouses all the quick, lightly
Stirring over roots of grass
Deep down that will not ever
Leave the dead unshadowed in graves.

Morning is the resurrection
And the leaf's everlasting renewal,
Restoration of our loves:
For however close we lie
Buried under mounds of night,
Though flesh by flesh persuade us we
Lie breathing nearly one in dark;
How separate we are, how more than ever
Alone, divided by cold distance
Larger than physical space, being undefined.
Waking is a revelation:
Crocus grows no differently
From times before; what is changed
In air around us that billows sleeves
And wonderingly supports the birds,
Is not nature preferring probability,
But change the mind makes of morning

With a snatch of wonder, as if every waking
Were done for first time. And restores
Our love: bird, beast and plant
Seem our personal care; men
Walking familiar street can be
Source of our communal pity; love
Is possible this sunlight moment
And grows there larger than shed light.

Morning is the resurrection
Of the quick: even though doomsday
May speak to some with eloquence of grief
So that leaf's green sparkle shows
As hard reflection of their tears:
All, from shimmering sun to springing
And singing bird, denies necessity
Of personal loss. O even here
In dark stone lodged in heart that lodges there
In birdcage window or tall tenement
Or viewless and life-locking basement,
It is the waking time that knocks
And enters; daylight that storms with weaving
Loops of sound-drenched, leaping air:
Resurrection and radiance of light,
Resonance of life itself.

We turn
Our backs on all but the revolution of daylight—
And who shall say it spills no blood
With its sharp knives, probing, twisting,
Its indifference to ruin
And the merciless hard white of its core?
It grows with shocking intensity
And persuades us to love its violence;
Arrogant, amazing sky;
Pitiless rolling on. Blind
To the human condition, day shines and cries out
As if there were no death, no last day,
Only harsh eternity of light.

DAVID WRIGHT: AN IMPRESSION

It must have been in autumn 1947 that I first met David Wright. Denys val Baker (who now edits *The Cornish Review* from our western promontory) had conceived the idea of a poets' week-end, and as he was the envied owner of a wooden bungalow just outside of Chesham he had no difficulty in getting the clans together. David Wright was one of the party (which included—if I remember correctly—W. S. Graham, John Bayless, Ian Finlay, the short storyist Fred Urquhart, and myself, as well as our host and Patricia Johnson). Roughly speaking, I suppose it could be said that we were, by contrast and affinity, romantics (a word a good deal more bruited about in those times than it is today). One thing, at least, we all shared in common: the endeavour to create an individual idom, a personal style in which to house our private sensibility. With Sydney Graham this was apparent in his constructivist use of language—the way in which out of his own subjective feelings he strove to give speech an autonomous shape, a euphonic outline ancillary to meaning. With my friend John Bayliss it took a different form. In love with the landscape of Gloucestershire since childhood, his verse was always harking back, with the chime of assonance and alliteration, to a countryside which dreams and nostalgia depicted. As for the rest of us, we were all romanticist and wayward after our respective fashions.

What I mean to suggest by this gossip is that I had the fortune to meet David Wright on an occasion when the setting, both natural and human, was in keeping with him. First impressions can be badly misleading, but strolling down the blackberry-bordered by-ways of Hertfordshire to our Sunday breakfast, after sleeping the night in a somewhat ancient caravan, seemed as good an introduction as any to the poet. On meeting him I had been impressed by his strong resemblance to the later Yeats; by his thick-lipped mouth, already greying hair, and the heavy powerful lines of his facial structure. If David Wright was a romantic poet (as his verse certainly convinced me that he was), then I saw that his type of romanticism would be very different, say, from that of James Kirkup. There was more of the primitive, I felt, about him—a greater fund of strength and resonance of mind (deriving, possibly, from his Scots and South African ancestry). I thought of him, in fact, as one of those figures—solitary day-dreamers or sleepers—who people the can-

vases of John Craxton, shaded by foliage and watched by sun or moon. But in David Wright's case I had to implement this image of a simple visionary being with a certain plenitude of power, a partly unrealised latent energy. Later on, now I have read his recent poems, I think I understand this new direction better on account of my previous knowledge of the person. In their heavier ring, their surer tread, their occasional splenetic violence, I see the element of force, which—as well as vision—belongs to the poet. Another way of putting this, is to say that David Wright's later poems incline to a greater realism than do his earlier compositions.

This more definite contact with the world, this sense we sometimes get of an artist planting his feet more firmly on the earth is, in general, a sign of development. Only the airy insecure talent—the mind which is marginal to basic experience—is probably content to go on dwelling in some ethereal cloud-cuckoo land. Sooner or later the artist feels the need to express himself in terms of those situations which form the centrality of human life. A light-weight talent may continue, perhaps, to operate outside of this orbit; but artistic growth, on the whole, would seem to tend, the more it matures, towards some inclusion or assimilation of what we generally call the realistic. By 'realistic' —as applied to art—I would not be thought to recommend the slavish imitation of the mere visual superfices of existence, nor yet to exhort the artist to adopt any set materialistic philosophy or outlook. In this context, I mean by 'realistic'* no more than the presence within any work of certain factors for which we can claim a representative human validity. It is this universal or archetypal factor, this sense of authentic correspondence between the situations and passions in a poem and the situations and passions in life which makes us admit a work to be convincing. In this essay I shall try to show David Wright's development along this direction.

His first book, "Poems", appeared in 1948 under the imprint of PL, a publication as tardy as any for which that firm in those years was responsible. Seeing that the latest pieces in it were written as far back as 1943, the collection could hardly be considered representative of David Wright's then current

* After writing these words, I remembered what Engels once wrote on this subject: "Realism, to my mind, implies . . . the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances." (No, I am not myself a Marxist!)

work. In the years that followed after, the problem for poets was not so much that of getting published with a minimum time-lag as of getting published at all; and although his poems appeared and are appearing in magazines and anthologies no further book by David Wright has been published.

Many of these first-volume pieces seemed to employ a romantic convention kin to that of the early John Heath-Stubbs, James Kirkup, and Buseby Smith. Moons, rivers, stars, streams, and seas abounded. The image of the drowned man appeared again and again. The verse inclined half to the Miltonic (with such literary words as 'succedant', 'harbinger', 'indurate', 'noctambulant') and half to the more fluid measure of free-verse with its over-run line endings and unequal line-lengths. His poem "Minster Lovell" exemplifies this with its somewhat stock epithets: "a broken stair", "cold fingers of the rain", "long brown hair", "Low-toned clavichord", "cold embraces of the grave", etc. Altogether, I have failed to find a single successful poem, using this romantic decor and unsupplemented by other devices. "The Sea-Lost", for instance, is spoiled by the banality of its refrain:

> *"like the golden moon her golden hair*
> *and like that southern star her eyes"*

whilst "The Bay" ends with a flaccid image, decorative but inadequate to express the painful significance of drowning:

> "His derelict spar
> washed on this spur, and his spiralling hands
> *followed their falling body like petals"*
> (my italics)

But if there are no whole poems in this medium which show a fund of promise, there are lines which seem to hold the seed of better things to come:

> "Impossible spring, approach with lancet showers
> the dry root of the orchid, wanting rain"

and

> "Westward I also, pulse and your companion
> *navigate autumn in a crowded street"*
> (my italics)

In the strong unlooked-for adjective 'impossible', in the noun-al adjective 'lancet', as well as in the verb 'navigate', used unusually

in this sense, we have the proof of a firmer grasp of language, of an attempt to sculpt in speech, which this group of poems nowhere else evinces.

But in this first book of twenty-one pieces there were four written, or partly written, in a more vigorous idiom. The longest one "Atlantic Eclogue", combines romantic vision and description with certain touches of naturalistic speech. The poet—a "walker below the roving moon's gold eye"—is addressed by the spirit of a drowned sailor and listens, "in the loud vowels of the wind", to the narration of his complaint:

> "It was not death, not even his best girl
> communing with some other king of sea,
> that ground the great tears of his salt regret,
> it was not what he had, but it was loss
> of what he never had, and it was loss
> of what he never would have had, and this
> questioned his heart and murdered his content."

Here is romanticism in its most aspirant form—the desire for that elusive *je ne sais quoi*, for 'a light that never was on land or sea". But instead of assuming a perfectionist dress—appearing as a wish for Utopia, say, or an obsession with some *pays de Cockayne*—the poet presents it as a cry from the heart, a yearning for a deeper and fuller fulfillment than, as finite creatures, we can ever enjoy. But the strength of the poem lies in the fact that, although the poet voices such an expression, knowing it to be an essential element in the universal human make-up, he does not—as many romantics have done—create an illusion to compensate him. As a romantic he knows this yearning valid: as a realist he knows its satisfaction impossible.

Regarded from the literary point of view the poem is important for its combination of highly figured and colloquial language; and note, as in the first four lines of the passage just quoted, how effective this combination is when lines of each are used in close alternation. On the whole he manipulates the latter more successfully; his employment of the former sometimes leading to the same kind of unreality as we meet with in Martin and Fuseli (though with less of these painters' vigour), as when the drowned sailor imagines the grieving girl he left behind him:

> "I saw, *noctambulant on the bright moonbeam.*
> her heart for my heart break"
>
> (my italics)

On the other hand, although the images in these passages are not too well chosen, there is a certain afflatus about them, a kind of upsurge or lyrical uplift, which saves the poem from that lack of surprise to which verse in the vernacular is often condemned. None the less, it is the sailor's conclusion we remember, and not the lines of more floral orchestration:

> "We wanted what we knew we could not get.
> It was not women or a handsome cheque.
> We knew without it we were bound to die."

In two other poems in this book. "Bomber Station Café" and "Letter to a Friend", the synthesis of literary and colloquial diction is even more fused and effective. A second reason for this greater success is that the literary language here, though memorable, is not romantic. There is something of the grand and heroic manner about it, but the thought remains obstinately realistic. This unification is best seen in the first stanzas of these poems, though in subsequent stanzas of both the language is not quite of this order. This is from the first poem:

> "He takes her in, the unemphatic hater
> of the continual boredom of the sky,
> and ribboned for that dangerous encounter.
> See my contemporary hero saunter
> into the caff, the table laid for tea,
> my similar, my brother, and my china."

and this from the second:

> "Look, there are many on the road to Rome,
> and some in air, and some up on the sea,
> obeying the robot voice of this bad time,
> scattered among the wrong the alien places,
> the foreign hearts, frustrated it may be,
> cheesed-off and empty-handed, far from home."

The counter-point of such words and phrases from different—so to speak—zones of speech as 'caff', 'my china', 'takes her in', "cheesed-off and empty-handed"; and 'the unemphatic hater', 'the continual boredom of the sky', 'ribboned for that dangerous encounter', 'the alien places', 'the foreign hearts' lends verisimilitude to imagination. We feel the note of actuality in the poems;

their authentic registration of a world in which all things and values are mixed. Before passing on, we may notice David Wright's adaptation of Baudelaire's famous line 'Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère" into a still freer vernacular with its little touch of Cockney at the end "my similar, my brother, and my china".

The poems that followed this first book largely cast off the surplus verbiage which the earlier ones too often revealed. They have also tended to that amalgamation of casual and coloured speech noticed already. Perhaps the most successful exception to this trend is the poem "A Stanza for George Darley" written in the romantic manner, and employing some of Darley's own devices: his onomatopoeic repetitions, and suddenly contracted and expanded line-lengths:

> "Yes, like you, Darley, down, down, down,
> Drawn by a wave bound harp and the water song
> Into a windpocked sound and a glittering grave
> From the axled gleam of the sun,
> Drowning a voice
>
> In the far tossed billows, the cavernous hollows, and honeycomb deep far down"

A second poem on a similar theme is "Rousecastle"; a descriptive narrative piece, more sparse and taut than the poem on Darley; though using almost identical methods:

> "Pete Rousecastle the sailor's son
> Heard from no siren throat
> The baffled, low,
> Endearing, murmurous, and glutted note
>
> Thrown by the sea to all her own.
> Indeed Rousecastle saw
> Alone the flat
> Discontinuation of a local shore"

The last stanza, however, which continues in the same vein of vivid but unadorned description, fails to clinch the poem by any epigrammatic touch or stroke of atmospheric finality.

Probably David Wright's best work, so far, is to be found in a group of "Seven South African Poems". In writing about the home of his childhood, he has achieved just that right balance

of irony, nostalgia, and plain fact wherewith such a subject is best approached. In portraying his grandfather, for example, he can show both amusement and respect:

> "His love affair with money lasted a long time.
> In my childhood I best remember
> His glass-panelled car and European chauffeur,
> And dignity in a cricket pavilion;
>
> Or when in gardens imitating England
> He in a morning coat between two ladies
> Walked, I was afraid to recognise
> My father's father, and kept my distance.
>
> Nothing became my grandfather so much as his age
> Impoverished and living in a single room,
> He kept his grace and distinguished costume,
> Imposing on distress an unstooping carriage"

In these poems David Wright has learned to mix his images in the most telling proportions: images from natural life, images from the world of man, mechanical images, mean images, images from the present and the past:

> "Farewell to behind them the stairs of Africa,
> To her rivers of willow, and the local kinema,
> The legless kaffir on the Town Hall pavement;
> To the cycling boys with candles in their hands
> Racing the curfew in the dark at Orange Grove,
> To a European tram bellowing down to Norwood,
> And the grand processions of the yoked ox wagons."

Apart from this set of South African poems and a couple of "Elegies" which appeared in a number of "New Road" I cannot lay my hands on, the two most effective and moving pieces are those in which David Wright has written of John Heath-Stubbs' and his own misfortunes. "My half-blind friend", he writes in the first poem with a tenderness perfectly controlled and becoming:

> "My half-blind friend, whom solitary as a crane I first
> saw awkwardly run
> On pavements out of his element, as if behind his
> skyscraper back there shone
> Glances of Eumenides invisible to everyone but to him"

whilst in the second, he speaks of his own impediment:

> "Abstracted by silence from the age of seven,
> Deafened and penned by as black calamity
> As twice to be born, I cannot without pity
> Contemplate myself as an infant;
>
> Or fail to speak of silence as a priestess,
> Calling to serve in the temple of a skull
> Her innocent choice. It is barely possible
> Not to be affected by such a distress."

On many of the nineteenth-century romantics fate set, from their childhood, a physical stigma. Byron was club-footed, Keats was undersized, Darley had a stammer, and Beddoes was bald. This mark of 'the furies' left them isolated (whether or no we agree with Adler). It drove their thoughts inwards, until they discovered a new dimension in which they were free. Here, their sense of inferiority lifted—at least for the interval in which they created. Fronted by a mirror in whose impartial face their suffering was faithfully reflected, each one had seemed to step through the glass: the 'Wonderland' beyond was romanticism. Prompted by his own deafness to effect a similar sort of 'break-through', David Wright appears to me best understood in terms of such romantic prototypes.

Now, for the romantic the sailor-image must always exercise a powerful attraction. In his book "The Enchafèd Flood", Auden has shown how the sea represents a sphere of freedom unattainable on land. In this field the conventions and tyrannies of complex society no longer apply (society posits not sea—but land-dwelling). At the same time, though, the ocean remains the most chaotic natural element. Man obtains freedom on the sea, but freedom only at the price of danger. Thus it is, that while Swinburne praises the ocean as an image of freedom, Darley in his masterpiece "Nepenthe", envisages it as a mortal region. In David Wright's poems ("Atlantic Eclogue", "Rousecastle", "An Apology for the Dead", "A Stanza for George Darley", especially, as well as many others where the sea is mentioned) the ocean appears as a symbol for home, for the death-wish, for freedom, for desire for the womb.

The sea, then, in this poet's verse represents always some mode of escape. When, however, imagination refuses to open this mental door, the world of insufferable actuality presents itself in

unrelieved colours. From moments like this, Davd Wright has written a number of indignant and ironic pieces: poems which reflect the poet faced by an adamantine mirror—a mirror of the brutal philistine world. This group of poems includes the three Moral Stories, "A Visit to a Poet", "The Poet Discovers Himself to be Infested with Lice", "A Ballad of Hard Times", a translation of Baudelaire's "Voyage à Cythère", and a "Funeral Oration" (reminiscent of John Heath-Stubbs' "Epitaph" in last autunmn's number of "Poetry Quarterly"). One healthy sign, psychologically speaking, is that in this bare impact of reality—reality unidealised by vision—the poet was able to view himself, as well as the world, ironically.

> "Then give me nerve and vigour, O Christ, to
> Contemplate body and soul unsickened."

So writes Baudelaire, as David Wright translates him; and just such unfaltering inspection the poet seems to have attempted. Three things are necessary, Wilhelm Stekel tells us, for human sanity and well-being; to surmount the past, to utilise the present, and to prepare against the future. In the case of the artist the past is surmounted by an act of transcribing, not forgetting. Such an act I have shown David Wright performing in his "Seven South African Poems". In the ironic and savage pieces we see him struggling to endure the present. Whether by an act of imaginative will he will prove himself capable of transforming his own future is something we cannot say as yet. It is more than most of us can achieve; something, perhaps, reserved for genius.

P.S. While preparing this essay for the press, I hear that David Wright is to pay his homeland, South Africa, a visit quite shortly. What its effects will be on his verse one cannot in any way predict. It may prove the very thing wanted—the rare poetic pabulum a number of us seek for.

DEREK STANFORD

A COUNTRYMAN'S FAITH

Selected Lyrical Poems, by RICHARD CHURCH (Staples 8s. 6d.)

To come upon the lyrics of Mr. Richard Church after a long diet of more typical contemporary poetry, with its concentrated thought and packed imagery, is to be translated from the noise and activity of London to the stillness of a country garden or a newly-ploughed field miles away from any town; to be suddenly faced with the fundamental processes and the continuity of life in a world which, but a few moments earlier, had been threatened by events in Persia, or China, or some other idealogical arena. Until one has become acclimatized, geared to the slower rhythms of this different mode of existence, so to speak, it is all so extraordinarily quiet and perplexing that, at first, one fails to detect any sound or indication of significant movement; then, as one's eyes adjust themselves to the tones of colour, to the minute details as well as the greater distances, the pattern of the landscape gradually emerges and one is pleasantly surprised to find that it is not so unfamiliar as one had assumed.

The countryman's scale of values is not, after all, so much at variance in its essentials from that of the townsman, for principles and ideals remain the same however diverse the customs and ideas of different communities of people—it is only that the countryman is more intimately concerned with

> *. . . the elemental stuff*
> *From whose obduracy we win*
> *First things first, the bud, the flower,*
> *And last, the Bread of Life.*

and precisely because he *is* so engrossed, he is inclined to make a virtue of simplicity in itself.

As a poet, Mr. Richard Church, who is also a countryman, has not entirely averted this danger. In the volume under review, a representative selection of lyrics written during the last forty years, there are, as is to be expected, a few pieces which add nothing to our enjoyment or understanding, and which considered separately, might well have been omitted to secure a higher general standard, yet it can, with justification, be argued that such pieces do assist in providing background against which the more outstanding poems, such as *Buying Fuel*—

Now I come to the farmer about some logs.
He says in a casual way. "You can have pear."
I stare at him for a moment. Shall I dare
Tell him I know that on the smithied dogs
In the brick hearth, black oakwood soaked in bogs,
Rose-roots, apple, ash with its swift, short flare,
And sparks thrown chimney-length to the open air
Or elm that looks the part but easily clogs,
No firewood smells like pear? My conscience jogs
Me, saying, "Tell him that it isn't fair."

And so I do. But he just laughs and looks,
Thinking I'm crazy. "I don't charge for smells,"
He says, "only for labour and the wood.
I'll bet you got that notion out of books."
But he is wrong; such perfume with its smells
Has never been described nor understood.

can be seen to better advantage. It will be noticed that, in his use of conversational rhythms and in his outlook. Mr. Church has certain affinities with the American poet, Robert Frost. The quietness of his tone and his deliberate avoidance of pronounced rhythmical stress do tend to obscure the fact that his poetry has a rare emotional depth, and that he is preoccupied, primarily, with spiritual values in a society which largely ignores its own necessities. But the flatness of tone is sometimes accompanied by a triviality of subject, so that the impact of the poem is weakened, and not all the poet's practical knowledge of country life or his capacity for accurate observation can redeem it.

This, however, is but one aspect of his work. There is another in which the exigencies of the poem demand a different treatment and Mr. Church does not fail to respond to the pressure exerted upon him. In *The Eight Men,* for instance, he describes how the village bell-ringers ascend the church tower and assume their positions, ropes in hands—all this in his usual controlled manner. There is even more restraint as he catches the peculiar stillness of that moment of suspension:

. . . the trees outside
Finger the stars, and catch the white
Frost-fallings of the Christmastide,
But make no movement: far and wide

The fields are frozen; the rusty vane
Groans; then the world is quiet again.
Only the clock: "Tick! . . . tock! . . . tack! . . .
tock!"

Then, as the eight men swing down upon the ropes and the bells peal out, he lets himself go—

. . . the belfry holds
The fury, hollows itself and folds
The flood from clapper and rim, but soon
The tower is swimming, the octaves rise
On their own ringing selves and fling
Out and over the fields, the skies.
Even the silver frost, the hoar moon
Hum with their metal glint, the trees
Crook their fingers, pluck the stars
That ring out with their jewelled voices.
Hard echo upon salvo, back and forth
From High Piper to Tenor, mad Christian mirth
Half sinful with the pagan Earth,
Defying the silence of the spheres,
The frost, that ghost of Time, the fall
Of the Eternal Light, all Powers unanswerable.

Despite the resemblances to Robert Frost, at some points of comparison Mr. Church is closer to Edward Thomas in the nature of his sensitivity. Like Thomas, he is conscious of the peculiar relations existing between man and his environment, of significances beyond the ordinary range of sight and sound, but he does not attempt to magnify what he instinctively feels and recognizes. If he cannot unravel the mystery he senses, he is content to report "No answer! Only the morning sunlight gleaming,/And dew-soaked grass upon the ruins streaming", without attaching an over-simplified moral and so distorting that which has been revealed. If he buttonholes the stranger to say "a word about the sun", it is only to show him how to roll

A devil's rhubarb to a shape
That fits into your threatened nape
And saves a touch of fever-stroke

rather than to preach a sermon or commiserate with his fellow-traveller upon the scheme of things.

It is this characteristic which separates his work from that of the Georgian poets, with whom he has often been classified; though, if at times he makes his point that both the cause and cure of the intricate problems disrupting society are to be found in the individual, it must be admitted that, in his poetry, at least he displays little social awareness. One gains the impression that this is not so much a retreat from the contemporary situation as a profound belief that all conditions and circumstances are governed by the same operative forces, and that a personal philosophy, to be valid, must be based upon inflexible principles rather than temporary expedients. The essence of Mr. Church's philosophy is his faith in the ultimate triumph of good over evil:

There is this consolation
In watching the wheel turn:
We'll see great Herod cheated
And a child survive again.

HOWARD SERGEANT

THE STRICKEN DEER

William Cowper by NORMAN NICHOLSON (John Lehmann 10s. 6d.)

THERE is always something extraneously interesting about a book written by a poet on a poet, and this is particularly true of Norman Nicholson on Cowper.

A religious rather than a social background—the deep stirrings of the Evangelical Revival rather than the empirical self-contented Eighteenth Century—is the environment in which Mr. Nicholson places his subject; and he speaks of the Revival as from the inside. This is very refreshing. The Post-Oxford Movement intellectual approach to Evangelicalism has always tended to look upon the whole thing as a "phenomenon" and a pity. We may not feel towards Evangelicalism with the same élan of personal experience as Mr. Nicholson does, but his enthusiasm makes us understand it in a more vital way than can any academic detached speculation.

So we are given Mr. Nicholson wholeheartedly enjoying his interpretation of Cowper. (How seldom do we feel that a critic

is enjoying himself!). We are also given the Cowper who, "without the Revival . . . would never have become a poet, for it gave him a deep emotional experience, a prolonged fervour which for many months lifted him like a love affair above the compromises and consequences of everyday life." The author is not concerned here with the relationship between Cowper's religion and his madness. Concentrating on Cowper's verse, and using his life story merely for emphasis, Mr. Nicholson explores with unconcerned and honest subjectivity the sources of the poet's inspiration. He devotes separate chapters to the Moral Satyrs, the Olney Hymns (where he has some good things to say on the nature of hymns in general); and dwells on *The Task* at what some may consider too great a length, at the expense of the minor poems. To those who (like myself) would willingly sacrifice the whole of *The Task* for the purer verbal merits of the poem beginning:

Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,
Nor swifter greyhound follow,

it can only be said that Mr. Nicholson thinks otherwise; for to censure him for departing from literary criticism in the strict sense, would be to criticise him for being the type of critic he is. Moreover, he makes the claim that "if we are to enjoy Cowper to the full at least part of our pleasure must come from factors which are outside the scope of literary criticism."

We should be grateful for an original, personal and at the same time serious approach to a poet who, stricken deer though he was, boring though he often is, cannot ever be left out of account where English literature is concerned. I have said Mr. Nicholson's attitude is refreshing. That is not only due to his own personality being present on every page, but to the fact that he is not afraid to use affluent imagery in a critical work, not afraid of seeing the 18th century out of step with Cowper rather than the other way round, and not afraid of revealing his own poetic affinity with Revivalism. But then, Mr. Nicholson is not one of The Boys.

MURIEL SPARK

SOME NEW BOOKS

After his remarkable long poem *The Traveller* Mr. De La Mare gives us another major work of 64 pages, *Time's Winged Chariot*. It is an amazing feat for this grand old man of English poetry. Its theme is time, one that has always haunted the lines of this poet. The work is a collection of short poems of between six and a dozen stanzas separated by a space. All the lines in each stanza rhyme. The ample margins are filled here and there by quotations without the name of the author. Some quotations are incorporated in the text of the poem itself. This succession of brilliant facets of a single thought, in spite of the antique, half churchyard, half library embedded muse of Mr. De La Mare, has some very beautiful lines such as

Time with an infinite gentleness through them flows.

This is certainly the work of 'The unageing mind. Its hidden life has been/This edge of contrast to the day's routine,' one of the quotations to which I cannot put a name.

Miss Vivienne Koch who teaches in New York University and who has contributed articles to the pages of *Poetry Quarterly* has written an interesting book on the interpretation of Yeats's last poems called *W. B. Yeats, The Tragic Phase*. She wishes to draw attention to the profound agony of Yeats's conflict which was the source, energy and theme of his old age.

One of the most interesting modern Greek poets is Constantine Cavafy. He died in 1933 but his work has only been available in magazines and other fragmentary forms. It is now translated by John Mavrocordato with an introduction by Rex Warner. Owing perhaps to Cavafy's seclusion in Alexandria he created a world very much his own out of the odd stones and broken columns of an old civilisation with which we are all familiar. His fitting together of those fragments is so quiet and unostentatious, but so alive that we feel that we can really see the strange temple he has built.

The Romantic Agony by Professor Mario Praz treats in very minute detail of the effect of the tradition of Byron and De Sade on the poets and painters of the nineteenth century. It is a well known book, and well worth possessing, but it has been long unobtainable since the first edition was printed in 1933. This second edition, with corrections, will therefore be very welcome.

Max Jacob has not been without influence on some contemporary English poets. He died in a concentration camp near

Paris on the eve of the liberation. Born in Britanny of Jewish parents he was a member of the group of painters and poets including Picasso and Apollinaire who lived in Montmartre in the twenties, but he became a Christian and retired for seven years to a Benedictine monastery. He returned to the world in 1928 and lived the life of a poet, that is, a martyr to the horror of western civilisation. Jacob can almost be considered a perfect symbol of the poet's life in the Europe between the wars. The struggle to serve the Muse at that time has perhaps never been so abysmally cruel, with no radio, no welfare state, no grants, nothing. *The Lotus Press* has made a very praiseworthy effort in publishing this volume. They are also printing a series of poets, three of which are old contributors to *Poetry Quarterly*, John Bayliss, Charles Higham and Marjorie Boulton. In these efforts can we forecast the revival of poetry in the regions that we have hoped for?

In spite of having been made a scape-goat in one of the more despicable episodes of recent history Ezra Pound is becoming every day more acknowledged as the greatest living poet writing in the English language. Few American critics will deny this very profound influence his early poems had on everybody writing in the first quarter of this century. As Diaghilev burst like a bomb in the world of ballet so Pound shook to its foundations the flimsy contraption of the twilight 'nineties still agonizing in the time of good King Edward. Ezra left London and the field to his disciple Eliot—who has served his memory well as only the director of a great publishing house can. Pound fixed himself permanently in Italy, the country to which the Anglo-Saxon has always escaped. But he did not return when the crack-pot world of the 'thirties collapsed. He remained in the aura of his own ideas, in the light of his own Mediterranean retreat. And for that the little men would not forgive him, in spite of the fact that the government of one Canadian state had put into practice the theories on which alone he could be convicted.

With the publication of *The Poetry of Ezra Pound* by Hugh Kenner we have at last an authoritative and up-to-date account of the poet's methods and aims, and for anybody who has the one volume edition of the *Cantos* published by *New Directions* this will be an invaluable supplement. Mr. Kenner is a young American critic. It must be acknowledged that the standard of literary criticism in the U.S. is much higher than it is in this country. Mr. Kenner's useful work is less arid, more refreshing

as a book in its own right, and should establish his reputation as a critic of great interest on both sides of the Atlantic.

It is fashionable now among some English critics to look with a pocket lense at the content of a poem to discover its philosophical significance. In some of the greatest poetry the ideas, considered as philosophy, may be very slight, or even trifling when transcribed into prose. Poetry is something else. Like an irridescent and beautiful weed in a rockpool when it is withdrawn by the slimy hands of critics it becomes just a bit of slush. That thought can be the hard vertebrae of a poem which can carry its life on from one generation to another is not to be denied. But it is perhaps a sad thought that so many good poets get bitten with it, and what to them seems a profound and irrefutable system should look like old junk in the eyes of the next generation. However, books about the philosophy of poets will always be written and Mr. Raymond Tschumi has given us one more. He examines the philosophical element in a dozen or so of contemporary poets, including W. B. Yeats, who is a better example of what I have just said than any other. In his preface Mr. Tschumi rightly mentions Geoffrey Bullough's *The Trend of Modern Poetry* as the most useful survey of the historical background of his subject, although rather sketchy in its treatment of the recent period. It is at least honest and comprehensive and to the time of writing the only one that is so. I recommend it to the ignorant or unbiassed gentlemen who compile anthologies supposedly representative of the last fifty years. *Thought in Twentieth Century English Poetry,* Mr. Tschumi's contribution to what is perhaps an overworked subject, is otherwise a dull book, but many people will find it a useful one.

Poetry in the theatre is now the thing, and some think it is the last hope of a public of any size for verse. The success in that intellectual desert, the West-end, of Mr. Christopher Fry's pieces of coloured rhetoric will be grudged by no one except the anti-clerical diehards and the Bloomsbury fellow travellers who are all terribly careful never to mention his name. Now we have from Mr. Derek Stanford, who is a frequent contributor to *Poetry Quarterly,* an appreciation of Fry's work as a whole, and a detailed commentary on all his plays. For Fry addicts this book will naturally be of interest, but it will be even more useful to those who perhaps know one or two of Fry's plays and want to inform themselves about his lesser known work. There is only one quibble I have with Mr. Stanford and that is his depreciation of Anouilh in relation to his hero. What has

been translated as *Ring Round the Moon* is not Anouilh's best play. It is an early one. It is light and superficial, artificial if you like, but it is perhaps possible to retort that Fry himself is not to be considered too portentously. In his other plays Anouilh is of much weightier metal than anything Fry has ever given us yet.

The Submerged Village is Mr. James Kirkup's second full-length collection of verse. His first, *The Drowned Sailor,* published in 1948, earned him a reputation as a poet worth watching. Here we have an even more definite proof of his talent. These poems won him an Atlantic Award and he has been given the Gregory Fellowship in Poetry at the University of Leeds, the only one in this country to follow the American habit of attaching a resident poet. The book is a collection of short pieces and *The Last Man,* a long poem in ten parts. Kirkup has probably produced more long poems than any other poet of his age to-day, and as those who have written them know, it is a test which few can pass successfully. *The Last Man* is shorter than the others and is very much the better for it. These recent years have been a dry period for poets and their few readers. Here at last is a book which the increasing number of Mr. Kirkup's followers will be proud to possess. I would say myself that he is by far the most interesting of the younger poets writing to-day. In many the pleasure to be got from his work will be increased because it is undeformed by any -ism or 'philosophy' Mr. Kirkup's church is his poetry.

The publishers of Mr. Haro Hodson's book *The Visitor* tell us that his poems have a structure as intricate as the pattern of leaves and show his search for certainty. Not much meat here for the philosophers. Apart from a too liberal use of the archaic 'thee' these poems have an attractive simplicity somewhat reminiscent of Mr. De La Mare. The same publishers claim that Mr. Lawrence Spingarn (*The Lost River*) is the first of the younger American poets. Most of the older ones have been published over here. It is a pity that the younger should be represented by Mr. Spingarn, who is a long way from the first. But no doubt American poets must suffer the whims of English publishers as well as their English confréres.

In *The Voice of Time* Mr. Henry Collett writes of 'the nascent morn' and 'th'unseen', uses frequent capitals and weaves whole poems round words like 'boon', 'bane' and 'mead'.

Mr. Raymond Tong has collected his poems in one volume under the title *Angry Decade* 1940-1950. Many of these poems

were written to his Greek wife in the last years of the war and after. One of the best of these is to Hart Crane dated 1944. The last two poems in the book show some advance on these. *Dance Africa* is worth quoting

> *Dance Africa, dance for the night is coming,*
> *the night of terror where the world's sorrow*
> *descends upon the darkness of your drumming*
> *masking with ancient pain your bright tomorrow.*

The last poem *No More Words* voices the common dilemma of poets who feel the inability of speaking to the heart of humanity through the poor medium of the academic drivel that passes for the highest form of human cerebration, but does not feed the shorn sheep.

WREY GARDINER

BOOKS MENTIONED ABOVE

Winged Chariot by WALTER DE LA MARE (Faber, 10s. 6d.)

W. B. Yeats, The Tragic Phase by VIVIENNE KOCH (Routledge, 10s. 6d.)

The poems of C. V. Cavafy, translated by JOHN MAVROGORDATO, with an introduction by REX WARNER (Hogarth Press, 12s. 6d.)

The Romantic Agony by PROFESSOR MARIO PRAZ (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 30s.)

Max Jacob, Drawings and Poems, translated and edited with an introduction by STANLEY J. COLLIER (The Lotus Press, 5s.)

The Poetry of Ezra Pound by HUGH KENNER (Faber, 25s.)

Thought in Twentieth Century English Poetry by RAYMOND TSCHUMI (Routledge, 18s.)

Christopher Fry: An Appreciation by DEREK STANFORD (Peter Nevill, 12s. 6d.)

The Submerged Village by JAMES KIRKUP (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d.)

The Visitor by HARO HODSON (Heinemann, 6s.)

The Lost River by LAWRENCE SPINGARN (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.)

The Voice of Time by HENRY COLLETT (Williams and Norgate, 4s.)

Angry Decade: Poems 1940-1950 by RAYMOND TONG (Fortune Press, 6s.)

READY SHORTLY

ROBERT GRAVES

Poems and Satires

A collection of new poems written since the new edition of his Collected Poems was published in 1948.

7s. 6d. net.

"Mr. Graves," says *The Yorkshire Post*, "is a mature poet with immense power, a diabolically clever technique and an intensity which is both vivid and tender. Mr. Graves is a poetic force with a pungent and very individual style. He has a penetrating and at times a savage mind, but he has few rivals and no peers in the particular kind of poetry he has chosen to write."

CASSELL

LANDFALL

A New Zealand Quarterly

Now in its fifth year, *Landfall* is the only journal of its kind in the Dominion. It publishes work by the foremost New Zealand writers in many fields; it surveys the country's activities in the arts, and also in social and political life; it reproduces work by New Zealand painters, book-illustrators, photographers, stage designers, architects.

Published by The Caxton Press,
119 Victoria Street, Christchurch, N.Z.

Annual Subscription 20*s. net, post free*
single copies 5*s.*